

Readily Available Fire Extinguishers Put Fire Out on Logging Mobile Equipment

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To help TPA members avoid accidents resulting in injury or damage to property, the Timber Bulletin, in association with Lumbermen's Underwriting Alliance, will publish details of actual incidents and what can be done to avoid such occurrences in the future. By sharing this information, TPA and LUA hope to make our industry as safe as possible.

Background:

This information was put together from a personal interview with the owner of a long-term MTPA subscriber. This mid-size logging and trucking company

operates one conventional logging and trucking operation.

Lessons from Losses

This instance occurred in late summer while dry and sunny with

temperatures over 60 degrees. The job site was located in a remote area where the primary wood species was jack pine.

The involved mobile equipment had noted no maintenance problems within the prior two weeks and had been recently cleaned.

Operator:

The operator of this machine was actually the owner of the equipment. He would be considered fully trained in operation and maintenance of this type of logging mobile equipment. This individual has over 36 years of experience, most of which has involved the operation of a feller buncher.

Accident and/or Injury:

During operation of the feller buncher on a midweek morning, a fire broke out in the engine compartment. Leading up to this fire situation, the operator noticed that the engine started to labor. This caused him to check the gauges and the engine

compartment. Smoke was seen coming from the left side of the engine compartment. Following his emergency response plan, he shut down the machine and used the on-board 10-pound hand-held multi-purpose fire extinguisher to fight this fire. The fire was initially attacked through the rear left side panel where the flames were more intense, and again after opening the left side panel. The fire was extinguished, but not before damage to some of the engine components. In this situation, this individual felt that over 2/3 of the 10 lb. fire extinguisher was used. Fast action can and will payoff with a good emergency plan. No personal injury occurred.

Unsafe Act and/or Condition:

It is believed that the electric fuel pump failed, and this may have led to an electrical fire that grew large enough to rupture the air conditioning lines, some water lines, multiple fuel/hydraulic lines and damage some other electrical wiring/engine components.

Preventative Measures:

1. Implement an emergency response plan for all pieces of mobile equipment, and train all operators to follow these emergency procedures when operating. The use of the operators' manual is a very good

source for this information.

2. Follow proper shutdown procedures of all mobile equipment when parking for the day, completing maintenance, and/or in emergencies. This includes shutting down the electrical disconnect (master switch).
3. Install and maintain either one 10 lb. or two 5 lb. fully-charged multi-purpose fire extinguishers on all mobile equipment when operating. In high hazard mobile equipment, two 10 lb. extinguishers is recommended.
4. Maintain quick-opening fasteners on the engine/hydraulic panels on all mobile equipment. Fast access to interior areas is very important in an emergency.
5. Maintain good housekeeping practices in the engine/hydraulic compartments on all mobile equipment. Daily inspection and cleaning is the norm. Good housekeeping leads to good maintenance.
6. Review and inspect special maintenance concerns involving electrical wiring/harnesses, electrical components, possible damage to hydraulic lines and fuel lines, as well as other trouble spots. Thorough self-inspections will help keep your equipment operating safely.



This is what can go wrong very quickly! No one can afford these types of problems.